

Accordion competition invites young musicians to compete for cash

AUSTIN — Texas Folklife announces its fifth annual Big Squeeze accordion contest for up-and-coming Texas musicians.

The non-profit is hitting the road to meet the talent in their own communities again this year with free, live auditions. For the first time, The Big Squeeze will come to Seguin on Friday, March 25, at the newly renovated Stephen and Mary Birch Texas Theatre.

The event is being hosted by Teatro De Artes De Juan Seguin, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promoting a better understanding of Mexican-American culture through the arts.

The free public program will include auditions with young, local squeeze-boxers, a screening of the film "The Big Squeeze," and will be capped off with a Conjunto jam session by members of the Conjunto Juan Seguin of Teatro De Artes De Juan Seguin and community members. The program begins at 6 p.m. with the auditions, but participants should arrive by 5 p.m.

Auditions are open to the public and are free. Contestants may register on site or in advance by calling Texas Folklife at 512-441-9255 or visiting www.texasfolklife.org.

"The Big Squeeze" film, directed by award-winning director Hector Galán, premiered at the South by Southwest Film Festival in 2009 to rave reviews and an enthusiastic audience.

Since then it has been featured on public televisions nationwide. The film documents contestants during the first two years of The Big Squeeze contest, from the urban barrios of

WANT TO PLAY?

Auditions for the Conjunto jam session are free and open to the public. Contestants should arrive at 5 p.m. on Friday, March 25 at the Texas Theatre in Seguin. Register on site, by calling 512-441-9255 or at www.texasfolklife.org.

Houston to the colonias along the U.S.-Mexican border.

The film visits these inspiring young artists at home, and follows them as they take the stage for the final contest at the Accordion Kings & Queens Festival in Houston held every June.

The Big Squeeze contest is open to Texas accordionists 21 years of age and younger. All genres of accordion-based music are encouraged to audition, including Cajun; German, Czech, and Polish polka; Tejano, Conjunto and Norteño; Western; and Zydeco. Contestants will be judged by a panel of esteemed music professionals on song interpretation, technical skill, originality, execution, and stage presence.

Interested players are encouraged to reserve an audition slot at a venue in their region by contacting Texas Folklife.

Those who cannot attend an audition may also mail or e-mail their entries to arrive at Texas Folklife no later than April 1. The complete contest rules and entry forms are available online at www.texasfolklife.org or by calling 512-441-9255.

Semifinalists selected by audition or mailed

entries will be hosted in Austin to take part in the semifinals held on April 30 at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum.

At that time, up to four finalists will be selected and awarded \$300 each as well as having their hotel stay paid in Houston to compete before a large, enthusiastic audience of accordion fans at the Accordion Kings & Queens Festival on June 4. Last year's crowd numbered over 6,000.

The Big Squeeze 2011 grand-prize-winner will be selected at the concert by the panel of judges with help from the audience.

The grand-prize-winner will receive a prize package valued at \$4500, including a \$1000 cash prize, a brand new Hotmer accordion and recording time at the historic Hacienda Records in Corpus Christi, as well as promotional support from SugarHill Records, Hohner, Inc., Hacienda Records and Texas Folklife, and other professional opportunities.

"We're very excited to be hosting the Big Squeeze in Texas once again. Last year I had the honor and pleasure of crisscrossing the state discovering talented young musicians. We doubled participation in the program, evidence that our rich musical heritage is alive and well," said Program Director Cristina Balli. "We want to continue supporting the musical education of these young squeeze-boxers and at the same time share this cultural treasure with our audience. I'm looking forward to this year's contest, meeting the contestants and their families, and crowning 2011's Big Squeeze champion."